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Making a Difference

It's like a breath of fresh air working with Pat Cupell and the Air Quality Policy Section. Well, at least that's what the team of air quality planners in the Transportation Planning Division hopes for.

By Ron Loar

Theirs is the job of continuously implementing transportation related provisions of the Federal Clean Air Act in Arizona. Clean air is everyone's business, according to Cupell.



Left to right: Pat Cupell, Beverly Chenausky and Mark Wheaton of the Air Quality Planning Team check out one of several monitoring devices that measure levels of carbon monoxide and particulate emissions. The data gathered by the high-tech monitors is used to prescribe abatement methods and predict sources of pollutants.

ADOT is required to ensure that transportation plans, programs, and projects conform with federal and state environmental mandates. To accomplish this, Pat Cupell, along with Beverly Chenausky and Mark Wheaton work with city, county, and tribal governments, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Federal Highways Administration, state and federal environmental agencies and private industry to implement clean air requirements. The Air Quality Policy Section has represented ADOT on the past Governor's Task Force on Clean Air Strategies as well as the Brown Cloud Summit. They also work closely with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality on statewide abatement programs and research projects for air quality and transportation planning.

The Air Quality Team is responsible for insuring that air quality planning and transportation planning work hand-in-hand through consultation, research, and educational awareness, according to Cupell. Pat sees ADOT's role as one of proactive stewardship. "These are not mutually exclusive processes and with the right mix of strategies we can excel at both," Cupell said.

Currently there are several statewide areas that do not meet the requirements for one or more of the various air pollutants. Along with the responsibility of implementing the transportation related provisions

required in the Clean Air Act the TPD Air Quality Policy Team is involved in statewide consultation processes. These include participation on state, multi-state, and national committees and workgroups addressing air quality issues such as particulate pollution, carbon monoxide, ozone, regional haze, and visibility. They have initiated and are participating in several statewide air quality research projects including establishing programs for sustaining clean and clear air in areas that are currently meeting the national air quality pollutant standards. Another major project that the team initiated and is nearing completion is the development of a standardized education and outreach dust mitigation certification program for ADOT employees, construction contractors, and other customers. Information on the research projects and the dust mitigation training program is available on the TPD Air Quality Policy Team website at <http://tpd.az.gov/air/>

The team also represents ADOT on developing statewide transportation conformity plans that ensure that transportation plans, programs and projects do not produce new air quality violations, worsen existing conditions, or delay timely attainment of national ambient air quality standards. Other team responsibilities include determining air quality and transportation control measures for inclusion in plans for areas that do not meet the national air quality standards, or non-attainment area plans. Control measures that are adopted by the State Transportation Board are monitored for progress and reported on by the TPD Air Quality Policy Team. The Air Quality Policy Section also represents ADOT as active participants during the development of State Implementation Plans.

"The stakes are high," according to Cupell. Major concerns for human health from exposure to unhealthy levels of pollutants such as particulate matter (PM-10 and PM-2.5) emissions include respiratory ailments, damage to lung tissue, cancer and premature death. Federal funding for highway construction could also be negatively impacted if clean air requirements are not met and maintained in those areas in the state that are currently not in compliance with one or more of the federal standards for air quality pollutants.

The Air Quality Section is also responsible for review and analysis of potential and proposed state and national legislation that could impact transportation activities. Through consultation the team participates in project selection, choosing projects that improve air quality that are funded through various federal programs. Changes to transportation improvement plans that impact project selection for air quality are also addressed through the consultation process.

The TPD Air Quality Policy Team has been engaged in air quality and transportation planning issues on a statewide basis for several years. "The goal of this continuing effort was to form a strong basis for current and future strategies to fulfill the role of air quality and transportation planning as an integral part of ADOT's everyday business," Cupell said.

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